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Another plumb the CIA rabbit

By Tom Nugent

Los Angeles

It usually begins with a telephone call. The voice says something like "Hey, have you heard the latest on the TRW affair? Have you heard about what happened down in Peru?"

Right away, you take a very deep breath. Here we go again, you tell yourself, it's time for another tumble down the rabbit hole.

"Really," says the voice. "This guy in San Diego says Boyce dug the stuff up out of the desert. He says it was engineering diagrams, stuff like that, and Boyce asked him to deliver it to a man in Lima. A hotel room in Lima. I think this guy might talk, if you want to interview him. . . ."

Then the voice explains that he's a free-lance writer in Portland, Ore., and he saw some stuff you wrote on the TRW case a few months ago, and he figured you might be interested in these late-breaking developments that were just reported on the West Coast by United Press International.

And you are, even though you realize, with that queasy, sinking feeling you always get in these situations, that you're about to stumble once again into the absurdly tangled, incredibly murky world of U.S.-Soviet espionage—a world which, like Alice's mad, mirror-filled rabbit hole, provokes an endless series of tantalizing questions without ever answering any.

What really happened to John Arthur Paisley, anyway? Why did Nicholas Shadrin suddenly disappear during a walk across a Vienna square in 1975? How could Christopher Boyce, an international espionage figure, have escaped so easily from a federal maximum-security prison last year?

But yes, you're definitely interested. So

you'll catch a late flight to Los Angeles. You'll meet the San Diego contact in a Hollywood coffee shop and go over everything he knows. You'll spend whole afternoons on the telephone calling people coast to coast with questions no sane person should have to hear. (And in the end, of course, you'll check in for the ritual "No comment" from the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency.)

Then, when the smoke finally clears (and in this case, after the FBI shows up to ask you what you've learned about the Boyce affair), you'll settle down to chew over a new batch of bizarre questions: Could there be a connection between the TRW case and that earlier KH-11 spy satellite leak in Athens, Greece? What about those reports that John Paisley also worked on the satellite system? Why did the CIA tell Nicholas Shadrin's widow that everything depended on an intelligence agent it referred to only as "Goldfinger?"

And there's one more, of course: How much has your perception of these enigmatic events been influenced by your own growing paranoia?

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A month ago, in that quiet coffee shop in Hollywood, a 32-year-old former convict named Douglas Wargo nervously explained how he had stumbled onto something that was too big to understand.

"It's like quicksand," he said of the new, frightening world into which events had recently hurled him. "I just don't want to go under."

His fear was understandable. Douglas Wargo, who four years ago did a brief stint at California's Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution (he was convicted of smalltime mail fraud after failing to pay for some charged airline tickets), was about to be summoned before a federal grand jury that was looking into charges of abetting a fugitive and espionage.

The jury wanted to know why Mr. Wargo had briefly sheltered one Christopher John Boyce at his mobile home near San Diego last October.

The prosecutors also wanted to know why Mr. Wargo had agreed to deliver a certain package from Boyce to an unnamed contact in a Lima (Peru) hotel room in March, 1980.

Mr. Wargo was in big trouble.

Now, between cups of coffee, he labored to set the record straight. He had decided to talk, he said, in the hope that lots of public attention would keep the curious feds at bay. He explained that he had had no idea, as events unfolded, that Chris Boyce was an escaped felon.

Nor did he imagine, he said, that the document, which he ferried to Peru—and for which he received \$3,500 from a "Russian-sounding" contact—might contain top secret information about America's spy satellite system.

He claimed to have been unaware of the widely publicized TRW espionage case—a dramatic and complicated series of American intelligence leaks in which two young Californians, Christopher John Boyce and Andrew Daulton Lee, were convicted of peddling spy-satellite secrets, stolen from Southern California's mammoth TRW Corporation space and aeronautics manufacturing complex, to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City during the mid-1970s.

Mr. Wargo insisted that he had known nothing during his Peruvian mission, about the Boyce-Lee convictions. He did not know, for example, that Boyce had been found guilty while working as a \$140-a-week clerk in the corporation's top secret "black vault" of microfilming data related to the American spy satellite program, and then passing it on to Lee, who ferried it periodically to the Soviets in Mexico.

He did not know that some of the pilfered information involved specifications for the KH-11, or "Keyhole" satellite program—a major component in the American spy-in-the-sky system for defense against nuclear attack.

Mr. Wargo was also unaware, he said,

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